

is a sneak attack on *Roe v. Wade*, and there is no question whether it would threaten a woman's right to reproductive choice. At the same time, this bill does nothing to address the real need for Federal measures to prevent and prosecute violent crimes against women.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the loss of a pregnancy through violence to a woman is a tragedy for the woman and for her family. That is why I urge my colleagues to vote for the Lofgren amendment. The Lofgren amendment recognizes that a crime causing the end of a pregnancy is a crime against the woman. If my colleagues truly care about women and children, vote for the Lofgren amendment and vote no on H.R. 503 if the amendment is not included.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LARGENT).

Mr. LARGENT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Ohio for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of holding criminals accountable for their actions that affect the unborn. The Unborn Victims of Violence Act represents a much-needed clarification of current Federal code to protect preborn children from violent crime.

Last year, the House voted 415-0 in favor of the Innocent Child Protection Act. That act prevents any U.S. authority from carrying out a death sentence on a pregnant woman. There is no difference between the rationale of that bill and this one. If you believe in protecting an innocent, preborn child when the criminal mother is to be executed, you should agree that we must protect an innocent, preborn child when its innocent mother is attacked.

This bill supports women who want to carry a child to term, and it gives law enforcement the right to penalize someone who criminally interferes with her ability to do so. This bill is pro-choice, if you will. The choice in this case has already been made by the mother to keep the child, and when a criminal act takes away that woman's choice, there should be legal remedies to mete out punishment for that crime.

I urge my colleagues to protect the rights of the unborn and all mothers who have chosen to carry a child to term. Support H.R. 503 and reject the substitute.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON).

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Lofgren amendment.

I would like to point out to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LARGENT) that actually I want to hold criminals accountable for crimes against pregnant women. Twenty-four States have higher penalties for assault of a pregnant woman and, in Connecticut, for assault of an elderly person. That is right and justified. If that is what this

bill, the underlying bill, did, I would strongly support it. It is what the amendment does and that is why I support the amendment.

The amendment imposes much higher penalties, even up to the death sentence, on people who assault a woman who is pregnant. But it does something else.

I do find it almost unbelievable that my conservative colleagues would advocate such a radical piece of legislation. This legislation is truly extraordinary, because it changes the fundamental concept of law that has governed America since its founding. What is radical about this bill is not that it wants to punish people who assault pregnant women; I want to do that, too. What is radical about this bill is that for the first time under our laws, it will define fetal personhood. The consequences are going to be extraordinary.

What happens if a woman has a miscarriage because she worked too hard, she stayed up late, she drove herself, she did not take care of herself, and she has a miscarriage? Is she going to be a murderer? That may not be in this bill, but let me tell you, it is the next one down the road. What if, for good reason, for health reasons, she has to have an abortion? What if the doctor says, you will not survive if you do not have an abortion? Is the doctor then a murderer?

That is the underlying goal of this bill. Do not hide it from yourself. If you vote for it, know that you are voting for a radical change in the American legal statutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN).

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, when a woman and a child are assaulted or, even more seriously than that, the child is killed, there are two victims. The problem currently with our law is that we only recognize one of those victims. That is the purpose of H.R. 503 and that is the problem with the substitute. It fails to recognize one of the victims.

The gentlewoman before me made reference to the foundational principles of this country. What is it that is unique, that defines America? Why is America a different nation than other nations? Why is it that people have chosen to immigrate here? I would suggest that a great deal of our unique character is found in a sentence that says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." That is the purpose of our law, to create equal protection, because each life is important to us. That is a foundational American principle, and it is not currently in our law.

That is the purpose of H.R. 503. This substitute does not protect one of the victims of potential crimes, and that is the problem with the substitute.

I would urge my colleagues to vote against the substitute and to support

the very foundational principle that America is based on, that all people deserve the protection of law.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and for her leadership on this and so many other issues important to women.

Mr. Speaker, today in this Chamber we rise again to protect a woman's right to choose. Yes, once again. This full-scale assault on a woman's right to choose is dangerous and it is wrong. As a woman, I am deeply offended and angry.

First, President Bush reinstitutes the global gag rule as one of his very first actions in office. And now we have the Unborn Victims of Violence Act before us today. Where is the compassion for women?

I deplore acts of violence against women and stand as a strong advocate against domestic violence and domestic abuse. However, while this legislation claims to protect pregnant women, the reality is that it will harm women. H.R. 503 represents a direct attack on the Supreme Court ruling of *Roe v. Wade*, and therefore a woman's constitutional right to reproductive freedom. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence has indicated that H.R. 503 would actually worsen the plight of women in domestic violence situations.

This substitute offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is equally tough on crimes against women without weakening our reproductive freedom. The substitute recognizes the pregnant woman as the primary victim of a crime. However, it also allows for further punishment if that woman's pregnancy is ended as a result of the attack.

If Congress wants to ensure safe pregnancies for both mothers and babies, we should be passing legislation to increase access to prenatal care and to support and strengthen WIC nutrition programs and food stamp programs. But, instead, we are once again forced to speak out to defend women's fundamental rights.

I urge my colleagues to recognize H.R. 503 for what it is, a misguided initiative, dangerous and harmful to women. I urge a no vote on H.R. 503 and support of this substitute.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, we have once again heard this described as an assault on a woman's right to choose. I want to reiterate that the woman has made her choice to keep that baby. It is the criminal that took away that choice. We just want to punish that criminal more severely than he is under existing law.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), a proponent of this bill.

Mr. GRAHAM. I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.